

DIB DIB DIB

46

"Wait, you forgot your D.i.b D.i.b D.i.b"



Welcome to the 46th issue of Dib Dib Dib - a rustic, homely little tome, dedicated to the hundreds of nutcases out there who are interested in nothing else other than frittering away their precious time playing games, chatting about the inconsequential without coming to any conclusions, and who generally like to make nuisances of themselves when it comes to getting at yours truly and his G.Ming. Cost of this issue 23p + postage (40p in the UK). Anyone wishing to send me money, send to Tom Tweedy, 29 Stanley Hill Avenue, Amersham, Bucks., HP7 9BD. Tel. 02403 4513

### EDITORIAL

This has been a bit of a hectic month for me. As you know (I mentioned last issue) straight after I finished Dib 45 I had to concentrate on getting out the bi monthly Spots of News. This is normally okay, as the zine/newsletter is generally not as large as Dib - only averaging out to twelve of so pages. The trouble is this time there seemed to be thousands of odds and ends to get out of the way - and all at differing times. First Spots was sent out, that's 900 envelopes, labels and stamps to be stuck on, down, and whatever. Then a couple of days after that the Minutes of the AGM had to be sent out, along with certain voting papers, new judging lists, an application form, oh you name it, we had to do it, that meant another 500 labels, envelopes and stamps. Do you know, going full belt and non stop my printer takes nearly 4 hours to print the labels? I was up to my ears in envelopes, labels and stamps - Jan just didn't work fast enough; it was three days before I found the settee.

Mind you, like most of us it all started merely as a hobby! One day I said to Jan, "wouldn't it be nice if we had a dog." That's all I said, nothing else. I dread to think what might happen when we finally get the small-holding we've been talking about - I'll probably have to start up something like Amalgamated Agricultural News or something, and that's without having to show the horse, goats, pigs, ducks and other livestock! (Is there any other livestock?) Oh for the quiet life when all I had to do was dive for and defuse bombs....

WORRIED OF AMERSHAM - SUBTITLED. "Hello Jon need a new computer? Hello Jon need a new computer?"

Yep... now after all this time my computer is letting me down. This is one of the reasons why this issue of Dib is so late - I hope it lasts/hangs in there until I get the man out. Alas the dear old Apple has been going wrong for the last week or so now, I'm having difficulty in booting/powering up. It's probably nothing much to worry about as to getting it fixed, but from what I can gather it'll be expensive, though probably only the transformer. The most worrying feature is that technology seems to have moved ahead at such a pace that computers like mine are now way out of date, and spare parts for these 'ancient' machines might soon become hard to come by. A ridiculous state of affairs. Anyway, I've decided to get rid of the lovable old workhorse before I overwork it. So....

If anyone out there knows someone who wants a 4 year old 64K Apple II+ with green screen monitor, two Apple disk drives, a Z80 CP/M card, serial printer card, and 'Vision 80' 80 column card, plus tons of software: dBASE II, Applewriter II, DOS Toolkit, List Handler, 3 Wizardry scenarios, Ultima II and lots of other games, plus all the manuals, please let me know. As that lot is worth half what it cost, second-hand it should go for £850. A lot of money so I'm willing to split.

As for the computer to replace it, if I can afford it I'll get either a 256K IBM PC with 2 double sided 360K disk drives, or the much cheaper 100% IBM compatible Canon A-200, which has a similar configuration, but I believe runs much faster. With that amount of memory it should be a cinch to produce Dib - especially as I'm hoping to be using Wordstar. Not that I'm getting such a machine solely for producing Dib you understand - no way, I need the extra size because I want to store Dalmatian pedigrees, their breeding defects, ailments and suchlike, and

that takes a large database. Mind you, the PC/Canon also has going for them the fact that Wizardry can be run on them.

As yet I can't tell if any of this is likely to affect Dib - it should do to some extent I suppose, but I can't really say how much. One blot on the horizon, if I can't get my Applewriter II word processing files copied onto the Wordstar files then it'll mean I'll have retype them all again. To some extent this will slow me down, but not to worry Jan'll soon get the hang of it, then things should pick up again. More worrying though is the 900+ address labels I might have to re-type - I hope there's some copying program that can change these over!

GLADYS AWARDS: Steve Norledge, editor of Rapscallion has now announced that he will be taking over the running of the Gladys Awards. Damn the man, I wanted to do these but thought John Miller, the originator, was taking them on. These awards were much loved because (a) they were a light hearted run up to Richard Walkerdine's Zine Poll, and (b) quite a lot of people thought they were fairer because they gave credit where credit was due in the different categories. All this is true - why, Dib won the Best Lettercolumn category for 2 years running. The categories will be:-

1. Best Zine; 2. Best Diplomacy Zine; 3. Best Games Zine; 4. Best Chat Zine; 5. Best Personal Zine; 6. Best Diplomacy GM; 7. Best Games GM; 8. Best Letter Column; 9. Best Looking Zine; 10. Best New Zine; 11. Best Zine for Hobby News; 12. Most Improved Zine; 13. Best Player.

I don't much go for category 5 about 'Personal Zines' because I don't believe there's any such thing. My zine is about as personal as it can get for me, and I suppose it's much the same for any other editor running a games zine. A silly ambiguous category. Still if it's what Steve wants... Anyway, first of all he wants nominations for the above categories e.g. Dib for Best Zine/Best 2/3/4/etc. And the results should be first published in the April edition of Rap. Of course it goes without saying I'll then publish them in the following issue of Dib. Deadline for these nominations: Friday 12th April. All nominations should be sent to Steve Norledge, Q30 Connaught Hall, Wessex Lane, Swaythling, Southampton, SO9 1XW. Do your best to vote - I think the awards are worthwhile.

At long last something is being done (on a regular basis) about the flyers in Diplomacy boxes. When I first joined the hobby, word was going round that although this was the best way of attracting new members into the hobby, nothing much could be done about it because of lack of funds. The typical hobby crunch. Keeping this in mind, when I took over the Diplomacy CGS it seemed to me that charging £1 per game to editors might be a good way of raising the money - and also deterring the fly-by-night cheapskate editors from taking on novice games and dropping them afterwards. It worked, and the money was raised, however, although Richard Morris has the Diplomacy Box Flyers in hand (well done, Richard) it seems the money is supplied from somewhere else. One just cannot win. As to the flyer itself: it will request an SAE to be sent to Richard, and a 2-4 page introduction to the game of postal Diplomacy plus details of the CGS etc will be returned.

Anyway, onto a different subject (my pet subject, Calcraft bashing). What on earth is happening about Boardman Numbers? You may well ask. It has been some time since we've had anything of relevance from our Diplomacy Statsman, Pete Calcraft. Some might argue that no stats are reaching the hobby at all! Surely not - after all the promises? But, I'll leave the subject of the stats alone for the time being - once again I ask, what about the Boardman Numbers? I did ask Pete Calcraft for some, who then put out a temporary flyer a couple of months back saying that he's far too busy to put out any stats, and, that if anyone wants any Boardman numbers they should contact Peter Northcott. I did, and Peter Northcott writes back:-

"Re your request for Boardman Numbers: There seems to be some confusion and misunderstanding here. I will not be taking on any stats job until July or August, at the earliest. My finals are now less than 3 months away,

therefore my hobby activity is as low as it's ever been."

Great. What am I trading with Pete Calcraft for? So he can have a full set of stats for his own use and amusement? For heavens sake someone step in and take the bloody things off him! Give the hobby back its OWN stats.

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HINTS FROM A GENTLER AND BYGONE AGE

Once again I dip into the old and faded pages of a book called 'Consult Me' to gain and resurrect knowledge long since lost to today's modern housewife. Some of you might think, seemingly, this was a good thing - well, for that I cannot say. All I know is that if I ever tried to get Jan to follow the hints given below, even I would get short shrift. (Yes, she has been known to rebel sometimes.) But the hints might serve to suggest, that once, there was a world not as complicated as it is today... or was it?

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BUGS:

"Persons who travel often meet with these vermin, and are sadly bitten with them. To prevent this, let your shirt, or night shirt be washed as ordinarily, well wrung, and then dipped in a solution of alum, or in a solution of camphor, and then dried. A sure preventive."

BUG POISON:

"The spirit of tar is a powerful remedy, applied by means of a brush; chloride of lime is a very good wash. Bugs have become so general a nuisance, much care is necessary to get rid of them. Bedsteads should be taken to pieces at the beginning of the year, and each part washed with a strong solution of corrosive sublimate. The crevices or cracks should be stopped up with putty, then the joints and crevices painted with white lead, to be well dried before the bed is put together. Bugs do not like paint, it is too cold for them. If the walls are infested, the paper should be removed, and the walls washed with the corrosive sublimate (stopping all cracks in the walls with plaster of Paris). The floor in inveterate cases, may be painted all round the skirting-board to the extent of four inches."

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By hell these Victorians didn't give their bugs much of a chance, did they? Naturally I assume one would have to get one's servants to do this kind of work - one wouldn't have servants doing simple tasks like adjusting bung holes in beer kegs whilst one starts tearing the house to pieces chasing bugs, would one? No, one jolly well wouldn't...!

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JOTTO Turn 9

We have a winner! Rosie Roberts takes her guess and writes:-

"Deeply though it pains me, I have to make what amounts to an accusation, viz: IF you scored/typed Nicholas Whyte's 6th Jotto move wrongly THEN the Jotto answers are as follows: SINKER, POSTAL, WYVERN, BUCKET, JAGHIR, FIMBLE."

...And Rosie gets them all right!! I'm amazed - not only does she manage to guess them correctly so quickly, but she also checks her guesses alongside other players scores thus proving my fallibility. This is all Sharp's doing... damn the man. My congratulations to Rosie though, an impressive result, you win for yourself the magnificent, not to be repeated, prize of 3 free issues of Dib.

(Cont'd over.....)

As for my excuse for Nicholas Whyte's 6th Jotto move... you're not going to believe this... but I copied down a friend's phone number on the back of the same envelope Nicholas sent in with his word on! I suppose I could apologise for this slight error... but surely Nicholas is partly to blame as he sent his word in two days after the deadline, scrawled on the back on an envelope, consequently I didn't spot his word until after I had adjudicated all the rest.

JOTTO: I'VE DECIDED I'D LIKE TO RUN ANOTHER GAME OF THIS. So, all those interested in playing another Jotto game in Dib should get their names in for next issue. And, just so I don't get any moans from that cheapskate Sharp, the gamefee will be 50p, with all money collected going towards the prize. Roll up, roll up, anyone wanting to show this Rosie Roberts girl how it's done, scratch your mark on a piece of paper and send it in to me. The rules are quite simple:-

I choose six words from the Shorter Oxford English Dictionary, each six letters long. Each month you send in one word and I then score each letter against each of my six words. For instance, if you submitted DETOUR and the six secret words were: RESORT, BASKET, GENTLE, PRIEST, MORTAR, BOTTLE the scores would be 4, 2, 2, 3, 3, 3 respectively. Obvious aim is to find all six words.

When you think you know all six words you may take a guess at them (you must guess all six) - but you must get ALL six right! Get one wrong and you're out. Anagrams of the secret words are accepted. And that's all there is to it... The first entry I allow three guesses to speed things up.

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#### LETTERS

LUKE CLUTTERBUCK: "I have finally managed to get a job now thank God, in advertising of all things! So I have moved closer to the city (just up from Bondi). ((I hated Sydney. COA noted in Dibs and Drabs))

You remember I was asking you if you knew of any Australian zines? I asked a few other people and none of them knew of any either. You know why? There aren't any! Well that's not strictly true, there is one but it costs about £7 gamesfee and £3.50 a move, plus the cost of the magazine itself. It seems crazy to me that I can subscribe to three zines 17,000 miles away for less than I can to one in the same country.

Anyway, all things considered, I have taken the insane step of starting a zine of my own! Well I was surprised. I thought, no zines... there must be no players. But I was wrong. Since I first put it out that I was starting I've been getting at least one new subscriber a day - and that's just by word-of-mouth in Sydney! It's great! I've had people coming up asking to GM games, write articles - one bloke even wants to know how to start another zine on his own! No doubt it will level out sooner or later but I was just wondering: any hints?!

Did I read somewhere that Martin LeFevre sent out some sort of booklet to prospective zine editors? Are there authorities to inform, and do I need to tell Gibson's games/Avalon Hill? Also, do you know who could tell me about how they went about getting the 'flyers' in the actual boxes of Diplomacy? Maybe I could organize something here - I don't know."

((Well, before I answer anything else, addresses to try: 'The Novice Editors Package' is compiled and edited by Geoff Challinger (editor of Home of the Brave), but is supplied, for a fee of £1, by Paul Seegal, 29 Heath Hurst Road, London, NW6. Some worthwhile hints. Martin LeFevre merely distributes 'The Novice Package' for new hobby members.

As for getting Diplomacy box flyers in Australian games, that's a good idea. The person to try here for information is our own flyer Custodian, Richard Bairstow, 20 Queen's Drive, Guildford, Surrey, GU2 6PP. Ask him how he went about it, then see what Gibsons have to say. I'm sure they'll only be too pleased in the interest, and once things like that are started off you should have forms pouring in - the birth of the Australian hobby!

As for an Australian zine, I have recently heard of one, called Black Hole

and comes from Larry Dunning, P.O. Box 111, Midland, 6056, Australia. Best of luck with your own zine, Luke - let's see a copy when you get it out.))

JOHN PIGGOTT: "Dib's been getting a bit serious of late, hasn't it? ((This, unfortunately, is true)) If this goes on you'll have to consider changing the title to Lokasenna.

The Ethiopia problem ((Oh great, this'll cheer the column up!)) would be easy to solve if the Ethiopian government wanted it to be solved. The fact is that Africa is relatively underpopulated and has easily the capacity to feed all its people and produce a large surplus besides. Droughts tend to be local in character, and while they do lead to periods of famine African peasant farmers have known how to cope with them for thousands of years. All they have to do is store food from the good years in order to eat it during times of shortage (Genesis 41, 17-36 gives a reasonably succinct account of how it was done on one occasion); or, alternatively, they can sell surplus produce when harvests are abundant in order to buy food from elsewhere during famine. This is all sensible and obvious; but under Col. Mengistu's regime those who store food are denounced as hoarders, while those who make their living transporting food from place to place are denounced as profiteers. Thus when the famine did arrive there was no way that the people could cope. Mengistu and his henchman, meanwhile, received over a billion dollar's worth of foreign 'aid' from Western states during the past six years. Most of this they spent on arms, which they used to make war on their own people. Anything left over they seem to have spent on whisky. The onset of the famine allowed them to intensify their war since they could now use starvation as an additional weapon.

Mass starvation is a dreadful thing, of course; but even so I can't help feeling that the famine appeal now going on is treating the symptoms, not the cause. In the long term, what the Ethiopians really need is to be left alone... but with a Soviet-backed regime in Addis there's not much chance of that. ((Nothing much I can say to that... I agree with what's said.))

Now we come to Gil Von Gavel and the Miner's strike. He is so right - we can indeed read everything there is to know about the strike in the New Statesman. But I wouldn't read that turgid rag unless I were paid to do it! The best story I've heard about the miner's strike came about when the NUM parasites were begging for grocery items for the strikers families. They had a big plastic crate full of cans, and an old dear came up, read their sign 'Miners Christmas Appeal', and asked, "How much?" The reply came: "As much as you like"; so she helped herself to a few tins of salmon from the crate and walked away. I only wish I was there, and could have plucked up the courage to do the same.

Oh dear, this is all too serious. Bring back Larry Trask and his bowls of Gumbo. I expect Richard Sharp thinks Gumbo is the fifth Marx Brother."

((Richard Sharp probably WAS the fifth Marx Brother - he's certainly old enough. I'm sure that's one of the reasons he doesn't have a TV in the house, he sees them as some form of magic crystal, only on par with yon magical electrical bulb in't ceiling.

Actually, joking apart, a few months ago I listened in total fascination to some old timer going on about this very thing. He was telling me about how scary it felt for the first time to just flick a switch and all this power brightly illuminated the whole house. How Science Fiction/Fantasy in those days consisted of stories of things like bi-planes with wings dotted all over with spikes - before any 'planes had flown. He said flying to other planets wasn't even considered - just the thought of flying was enough of an idea to grasp for SF fans. I suppose the clincher to how ancient this old man was, was the fact that his father used to tell him of stories of the Whitechapel Murders when The Ripper was on the prowl. Great stuff. I suppose the fear of flicking a light switch must be similar to grown ups today in regards to computers or perhaps videos. I know when I got my first video, I daren't press buttons before CAREFULLY reading and rereading the rules for fear of blowing something. Yet today's kids don't bother, they just plow in and confidently push anything.